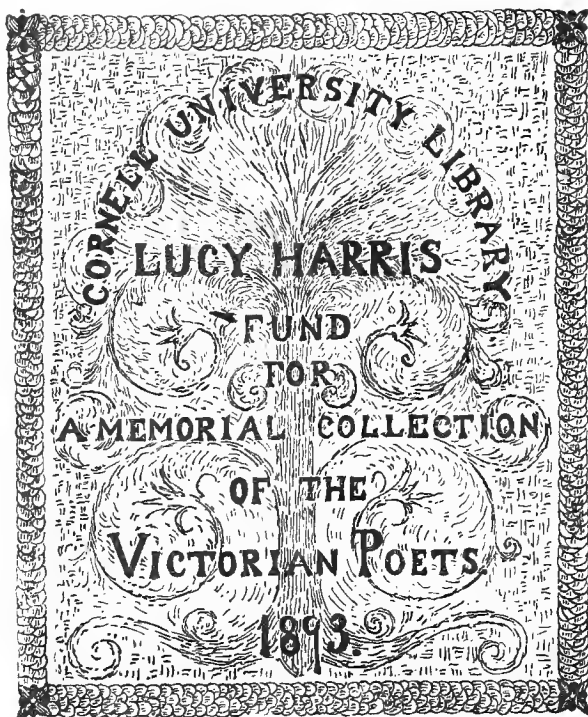


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A. 211561

18/4/1907.

A MAD WORLD

A Vision

OUIDA

Printed by

SPOTTISWOODE & CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE, LONDON

1886



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A MAD WORLD

A VISION: A.D. 2500.

THE human race has shrunk and grown small ;
The minds are crowded and the bodies poor ;
Men dwell in artificial light and air
Made foul by many a ' discovery ' rare ;
Machinery now does all the outdoor work,
And limbs, unus'd, have wither'd and grown weak ;
Inoculation saves them all disease ;
But then, alack ! it poisons all their blood,
And every generation born anew
Creeps with less vigour in its puny veins.
Morbific virus, cholera-microbes,
With typhoid molecules and lung-fungi,
With syphilitic and rachitic seeds,
And sickly spume of ev'ry possible ill
That flesh is heir to, fill all healthy flesh
By order of the rulers of the world,
Whose sceptres are a lancet and a tube,
And who deep down in their laboratories dwell,
And bray their fiats to a trembling globe.
Prevention's better far than any cure,

These say, and so by way of caution sow
 Broadcast the germ of every malady.
 They've kill'd all horses lest the glanders spread,
 They've kill'd all cattle lest the foot-and-mouth
 Disease should be communicate to man,
 They've kill'd all swine from fear of *trichinæ*,
 They've given sheep the murrain till their flesh
 Grows poison, and the flocks are all destroy'd ;
 They'd wish to kill all dogs, but need the race
 For their experiments and torture-rooms :
 (The dog is still the nearest soul to man,
 And so the fittest creature to torment,
 When the supply of pauper subjects fails,
 Or when ' for demonstration ' the demand
 In criminals or crétins can't be met,)
 There's only one thing baffles them, and plagues
 Their learned wits : it is Insanity.
 All these inoculated bodies fail
 Ofttimes to keep the minds above well pois'd.
 Insanity does spread in ratio sure,
 Precisely as the world to Progress soars ;
 For Electricity has banish'd Night,
 And with night sleep, and all old-fashion'd peace,
 And men who know not one real hour of rest,
 Though full of logic and of learning, lose
 Control of reason, and like idiots rave.
 The physiologists have taught Mankind
 To think but of itself from morn to night,
 E'en as the Fakir at his navel star'd,

And saw no other thing in heav'n or earth.
 Self-centr'd fears to madness oft do turn,
 And craven terrors weigh each reeling brain,
 Until, o'erburden'd, it gives way, and cracks.
 ' Our mad-houses are many, and our madmen more,'
 Say those who reign on earth from pole to pole ;
 ' Nay, is't not shame to Science in her prime,
 To see the human mind so oft distraught ?
 We Scientists are lords of all the race,
 Can we not find some cure for raving man ? '
 They meet in conclave, all these modern gods,
 Whose one religion's ' Knowledge of the Truth ; '
 The fears of men have made them lords of all,
 Their power's boundless as their will is law.
 One of their number haltingly puts forth
 The simple theory that, if men slept more,
 Their brains would be both clearer and more sound.
 But the Biologists straight chain him up ;
 What is he but a foolish renegade,
 Who'd spread mere worn-out prejudice abroad ?
 Sleep is the thief of time, and Science strives
 To make man independent of its aid.
 A few steps more, and Sleep and Death alike
 Science will banish to the vulgar Past.
 If madness doth increase—inoculate ;
 For human rabies as for canine rage.
 Inoculate ! Of course ! How have they fail'd
 To see a remedy so plain before ?
 'Tis but to stretch the doctrine of Pasteur

To its just issue, and all men are sane.
 Inoculation is the sovereign cure
 For all disease ; why not for lunacy ?
 Straightway they have some lunatics tight bound,
 And cut each skull wide open like a gourd.
 They take the quivering crazy brains quite out,
 And leave the madmen dead or dying there.
 All means are sacred in great Reason's cause,
 And none must dare oppose her dread demands.
 With many an art and lengthen'd studies wise,
 From these warp'd brains they draw the essence fine
 Of human madness, so distill'd and strong
 A drop had made of Thales self a fool,
 Or Shakespeare's wits had alter'd to Poor Tom's.
 Then, proud, elate, with ecstasy they cry
 ' Let us inoculate for Lunacy ! '

A billionth part of real insanity
 Pour'd in sane blood will keep it sane for aye.
 'Tis but the Pasteur theory enlarg'd.
 Inoculate, and madness is no more.
 No sooner said than done ; for o'er the world
 The priests of Science hold a boundless sway,
 And men, long crouch'd beneath their torture troughs
 Have ceas'd to dream of possible revolt.
 Not Baal, Mahomet, Greek Jove, or Christ,
 Was ever worshipp'd as these seers are now.
 They dwell in palaces and live at ease,
 And levy subsidies from all the world.
 All hats are doff'd to them and all knees bend,

Against their dictates there is no appeal.
 No Roman emperor nor Druid priest
 Had ever such authority as theirs.
 Through all the weary ages of the earth
 Man, lord of all, has always been a slave.
 Force of the sword, or magic of the throne,
 The augur's oracle, or tribune's scowl,
 One thing or other, autocrat or mob,
 Has always held the human race in thrall.
 The last of all its rulers are these men
 Who call themselves the Seekers after Truth,
 Who, from the egotism of the crowd,
 And from its quaking craven fears of death,
 Have built themselves a Power mountains-high,
 With its foundations in that deathless thing,
 The endless, shameless, Cowardice of Man.
 Cripples and idiots and all the poor,
 The halt, the blind, the maim'd, have long been left
 To share with animals the doom of pain,
 And writhe beneath the torture of the knife,
 Since Science thus makes useful Nature's waste.
 So none dare lift their voices to condemn
 When living madmen are now bound and slain.
 What Physiology decrees is Truth,
 And Truth is Fate, and none dare say it nay.
 'Let us inoculate!' the wise men cry,
 'For lunacy as for all other ills.'
 The human race obeys in trembling haste,
 From north to south, from east to west, all lives

Of man and woman, of greybeard and babe,
 Of poor and rich, of savage and of saint,
 Are forc'd to lie and have the essence fine
 Of Madness filter'd through their shrinking veins ;
 No genius shelters, and no prayer is heard.
 The mother cannot screen her yearling child,
 The lover cannot shield his best-belov'd,
 The poet cannot save his teeming brain ;
 No distance, country, class, can intervene
 Betwixt the human race and this new law ;
 So long that race has cring'd and crouch'd in fear
 Before the priests of Knowledge and their will.
 A great discovery stalks through the world,
 And all must yield to it and kiss the steel.
 Mere individual loathing counts for naught :
 Science has spoken ; death to all who doubt !
 If one life's left to have its foolish way
 The great Experiment will incomplete
 Remain : so perish individual will !
 Let all volition be destroy'd in view
 Of Science and of universal good !
 So all the living millions of the sane
 Are, at one moment, over all the globe,
 Impregnated with *virus rabiff* ;
 And all the Scientists in triumph shout
 ' Reason is God, and God resides in Us !'
 Time passes. Earth grows older by some weeks ;
 The augurs of the new religion strut
 Greater than ever through admiring hosts ;

Then, lo ! of all the multitudes of sane
 Inoculated from the madman's brains,
 First one and then another grows most strange,
 Forgets and mumbles, gibbers loud and laughs ;
 Becomes distraught, and like an idiot raves.
 Then others, terrified to see this sight,
 Grow mad themselves in horror of the thing
 Which into their own blood has crept and stirs.
 Clear minds and thoughts serene are foul'd and jarr'd,
 And happy voices change to hellish screams ;
 The virgin chatters of vile joys obscene ;
 The mother gnaws her infant to the bone ;
 The prince licks up the ordure of the streets,
 The lover mutilates the form ador'd.
 The poet from a dunghill roars and raves,
 The nursling tears the bosom that it sucks,
 The scholar drivels at the lips and grins ;
 A horrid laughter echoes thro' the air,
 And every face wears vacant bestial stare.
 The Physiologists (who care have had
 Not to inoculate themselves) grow scar'd.
 Science can never err : so much is sure.
 But yet—but yet—if the whole world go mad ?
 They've called a monster from the womb of time,
 And, powerless, they see it spawn and spread.
 ' An antidote ! Quick, quick ! ' such victims scream,
 As still have sense to know their reason reels.
 Alas ! the hand of Science holds no charm
 By which to call back Reason to her throne.

Great to destroy, it has no power to heal.
 Then all the madden'd billions of the globe
 'Neath all the skies like seas of fire rise,
 Vast, irresistible, as flames in wind,
 Hideous, horrible, with yells of hate,
 And ghastly laughter hissing like a snake,
 Seize on the men of science who have chang'd
 Humanity to Idiocy, and rend
 Them limb from limb, and burn their hidden shrines,
 Where torture for so long has reign'd supreme.
 'Save yourselves now, ye lying gods!' they cry,
 And toss their smoking ashes to the clouds;
 But vengeance comes too late: the world is mad!
 The gibbering crowds rush headlong like mad swine,
 And rabid hosts like sand-storms sweep the plains.
 There is no food, for none can gather it;
 There is no work, no order, and no peace;
 There is no measure kept of night or day;
 There is no sense in all the screaming speech;
 The crazy multitudes but fight and rage
 In blind unconscious warfare, knowing naught
 But the mere thirsty longing to destroy.
 The great ships drift at the wild waters' will,
 For in their rigging idiots climb and gibe;
 Th' electric trains fly headlong through the dark,
 Until, unguided and unfed, they pause,
 And stand quite still amongst the havoc wrought.
 The smoking cities burn like flaming flax,
 Shouting and singing madden'd hosts leap up

Into the flames, then sink for evermore.
 The fires roll on uncheck'd, and the foul stench
 Of roasting flesh fills all the blacken'd air.
 From pole to pole, wherever man has dwelt,
 Madness is king for one brief frightful day,
 And over all one harsh and hideous voice
 Croaks in a mocking threnody of woe:
 ' Science is Truth, and Science cannot err ! '
 Then all is quiet, quiet as the grave ;
 For everywhere upon the face of Earth
 The human multitudes lie cold and still,
 An insane laughter calcin'd on each mouth
 And senseless eyeballs staring to the clouds.
 Science, the mock Prometheus, has fail'd,
 And outrag'd Nature has forsaken Man.

COLOPHON.

The years roll on, the seasons come and go,
 The lovely silence of the woods once more
 Comes over all the tired darken'd globe.
 The rivers run beneath the blowing boughs
 Free from the taint and ordure of man's work.
 The sicklied air grows pure and clean again.
 The waters flow, the meadow grasses wave,
 There where the hives which once were Cities call'd
 In ruins mingle with the unturn'd soil.
 The iron ships within the silent ports
 Are green with sea-weeds and with ribbon grass.

The hateful factories and all their works
 Grow lovely with the veil of green leaves thrown
 About them by the ivy and the fern.
 The soundless streets are paved with green moss,
 And the blue speedwell blossoms at clos'd doors.
 The careless woodbine climbs the ruin'd steps
 And golden celandine fills empty hearths.
 Time's chang'd the rotting millions into dust,
 And all the human corpses grow as one
 With all the stones and sods on which they lie.
 Nature with gentle touch sweeps out the name,
 The place, the very memory, of man.
 The velvet-footed beasts pace to and fro
 Content beneath the forest shadows cool.
 The glad birds cleave the sunny silent air,
 And the deep hush of summer noons is stirr'd.
 Alone by the soft burr of golden bees
 Humming deep down in ruby foxglove bells.
 The cruel cannon in the long lush grass
 Have clover growing in their harmless mouths,
 And all the dread artillery of war
 Becomes the plaything of the windblown seeds.
 The briar-roses climb in blossom round
 The murderous engines which lie resting there,
 And nesting birds in muzzles of the guns
 Make their safe home and sing their simple song.
 Earth is restor'd to Nature and smiles back
 To the blue skies' unsulli'd radiance.
 The world is fair again and life is peace,
 For Man, the great destroyer, is no more.

January 31, 1886.

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A mad world, a vision[by] Ouida [pseud.]



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